Unit .30

Session .03

Experiencing New Identity in the Gospel of Jesus

Scripture

Colossians 3:1-17

1 So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. **3** For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. **5** Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. **6** Because of these, God's wrath is coming upon the disobedient, **7** and you once walked in these things when you were living in them. **8** But now, put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth. **9** Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices **10** and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator. **11** In Christ there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all. **12** Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, **13** bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive. **14** Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. **15** And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful. **16** Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. **17** And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Intro Options

Main Point:
As believers, we are called to put off sinful behaviors and put on new behaviors that reflect Jesus.

Option 1

Break your students into four groups. Each group will make a list based on the topic you give them; however, each group should not know what the other three groups' topics are.

- Things people worry about
- Things people dream about
- Things Christians should worry about
- Things Christians should dream about

Bring the groups back together to share their lists. Note how similar or dissimilar the "worry about" and "dream about" lists are.

- **Should the lists between Christians and non-Christians be the same or different? Why?**

Explain that in today's lesson we'll see that one of the big differences between Christians and non-Christians is what each sets their minds on. Christians are to set their minds on things above, not on things of earth, meaning they should worry and dream about different things than non-Christians.

Option 2

Break your students into small groups for skits. They are to imagine they are reality stars on a (fake) TV show called *Adopted into Royalty*. The premise is that a royal family (whether a real royal family like in England or made up) has adopted someone into their family. Your students, in their small groups, can decide on the background of the adoptee, but the further that person's origin from royalty, the better. The TV series focuses on how both the adopted person and the family adjust to this new situation, especially how the adopted person learns his or her new station and status. Your students are to create a scene or a trailer/promo from an episode of the show. It could be anything from a bit of family drama to learning proper dining etiquette.

Let them decide on, prep, and share their scenes. Once folks are done, debrief what themes or patterns they saw across the skits. Chances are good that one of themes was the adopted person's learning to let go of his or her old life and to accept and live out who he or she is now. Christians face a similar issue: as today's lesson will show us, we are to put off the old self from before Christ and to put on the new self we have in Christ.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Colossians 3:1-4.

As children grow up, most love to dress in costumes. On a whim, a child can transform into a ninja, a princess, or a firefighter. All a child needs to do is put on a different set of clothing. Once the look is right, the actions and tone of voice usually follow.

- **Describe the last time you put on a costume.**

The Bible talks about wearing different sets of clothing in life, except that only two are available and what we choose to wear is certainly no game. In Colossians 3, the Apostle Paul teaches that every person born into the world (except Jesus) is born with a sinful nature, and we wear thoughts, desires, words, and behaviors consistent with that nature. But for those who have come to faith in Christ, we have put off this old self and, in its place, have put on the new self which resembles Jesus.

As human beings descended from Adam, we have inherited a sin nature from conception (Ps. 51:5). Not only are we predisposed to sin, we are consumed by it. Our default state as human beings is one focused on sin and "earthly things." This includes lust, greed, envy, and hatred, among other sins, as well as the earthly, man-centered ways we try to overcome our sin. In this text, Paul addressed false teachers who preached that we must overcome sin through strict obedience to rules and laws. They preached a gospel that focused on what human beings could do to save themselves as opposed to placing their faith in Jesus. Thus, "earthly things" involved not just overt sins but the sin of self-righteousness, which is a different "gospel" that cannot save.

- **What are some ways people try to find salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ?**

Paul confronted this false "gospel" by emphasizing that eternal life is found only in Jesus, and never in ourselves. This is why Paul compelled us to have a heavenly perspective, for that is where Christ is. By placing our focus on Christ in heaven rather than the things of the world, we are able to avoid the distractions and temptations that seek to captivate our minds, hearts, and bodies. When we live this way, God uses us as a reflection of His goodness for the world to see.

- **What does it mean to set our minds on things above?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
As believers, we are called to put off sinful behaviors and put on new behaviors that reflect Jesus.

Colossians 3

"The Colossians are reminded that they not only died with Christ; they were raised from the dead with him too—as indeed they have already been told (Col. 2:12). When Christ left the tomb, he was raised on high, and is now enthroned in glory, at God's right hand. What does this mean for those who by faith have been united with him in his death and resurrection? They continue to live on earth in their mortal bodies, but they have embarked on a new way of life. The motive power enabling them to follow this new way of life is imparted by him from the glory in which he now lives. Since his people share his risen life, their interests are now centered in him; his interests, in fact, have become theirs. They must therefore pursue those things which belong to the heavenly realm where he reigns; their mind, their attitude, their ambition, their whole outlook must be characterized by their living bond with the ascended Christ. The conclusion is inescapable. Having died with Christ, they now live with him and in him. Their life is bound up with his; it is, in other words, laid up in safekeeping with him, securely hidden in God. Because he lives, his people live also: because he is their life, their life is as eternal as his. The world cannot see their real life at present, just as it cannot see the exalted Christ. A day is coming, however, when Christ will be revealed in glory, and those whose life is at present hidden with him will necessarily be revealed with him and share his glory."[1]

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 96, DDG)

New Identity of the Believer

When a person places faith in Christ, that person undergoes a fundamental change of identity. He or she goes from being an enemy under God's wrath (Eph. 2:1-3) to being welcomed into God's family as a beloved child (Eph. 2:19). The believer in Christ is declared righteous on account of Christ's perfect life and substitutionary death and resurrection. No longer is the person a slave to sin, defined by past failures or present struggles. The person has been delivered from the realm of darkness and now belongs to the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). Anyone who is in Christ is a "new creation" in whom the old, sinful self is passed away and the new, redeemed self is alive and progressing, becoming more and more like Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

TEACHING PLAN

Read Colossians 3:5-11.

With our heavenly perspective focused on Jesus, believers are commanded to kill those parts of us that distract from a faithful and continual focus on Jesus. God hates sin, and He will one day exercise judgment upon all rebellion. Earthly temptations appeal to the sinful nature that remains in us as long as we are in this life, but our solution can't be simply establishing rules and limits, as the false teachers did: "Don't handle, don't taste, don't touch" (2:21-23). Such rules may restrain sinful deeds, but they cannot address the sinful desires. The issue with sin is not primarily external. Fundamentally, sin is an internal problem, an issue of the heart.

- **What does it mean that sin is ultimately an issue of the heart?**

If we are to "put to death" and "put away" the sins that are both external and internal, how do we do this? The answer is based on a life in Jesus. Believers live out what is already true of us. Because of our faith in Jesus, we are new creations. Through our sharing in the death of Christ, we've died to sin, and through sharing in His resurrection, we are raised to a new life no longer slaves to sin, but under the influence of the Spirit. True transformation works from the inside out and is made possible only by Jesus.

- **Why is faith in Jesus necessary for putting to death the deeds of the flesh?**

Read Colossians 3:12-17.

From birth, we are dressed in our sin nature with its corresponding sinful deeds. But when we come to faith in Christ, we exchange that outfit for the righteousness of Christ (Gal. 3:27). We begin the hard and faithful work of putting to death the deeds of the flesh, yet this is only half of what we must do. We put away our evil deeds by putting on the characteristics of Jesus in their place. Instead of lust, we put on compassion and love. Instead of anger, we put on kindness and patience. Instead of wrath, we put on forgiveness. We are responsible to put on these characteristics, yet the growth comes from the Holy Spirit. As this happens, the church grows in unity, allowing us to shine Christ to the world.

Because of sin's curse, all people are relationally separated from God and without hope. But Jesus, through His death and resurrection, made possible what was otherwise impossible. When we live by faith in Him, we are given a new identity in Christ. From this new identity, we can put to death our old sinful ways and put on the characteristics of Christ. This transformation becomes a testimony that the gospel of Jesus saves all who believe in Jesus.

- **Can a believer put on the characteristics of Christ without first putting away the characteristics of our sin nature? Why or why not?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
As believers, we are called to put off sinful behaviors and put on new behaviors that reflect Jesus.

Colossians

3:8 Paul told believers to put away anger and wrath as these are characteristics of our earthly nature. In Scripture, we read about the wrath of God, but we must note the differenes between His wrath and our own. God's wrath is perfect, right, and consistent with His holiness. Whereas we are prone to sin in our anger (Eph. 4:26), God cannot sin and must punish sin in those who disobey His commands and violate His image given to them at creation (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:17). If God never put a stop to sin and allowed it to go unchecked for eternity, He wouldn't be holy, good, or just. Because He is holy, good, and just, His wrath will punish sin once and for all one day. For those who believe in Jesus, that punishment graciously fell on Jesus on the cross (Col. 1:20).

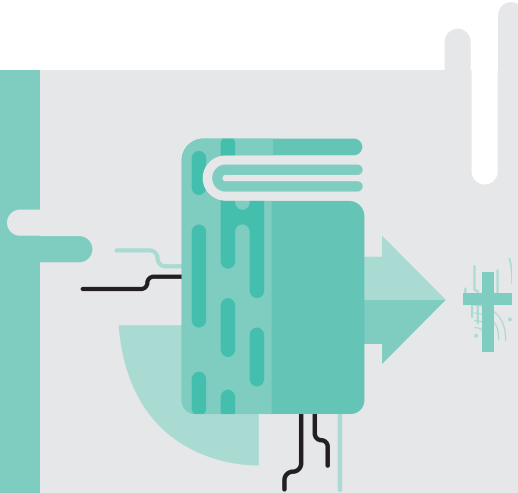
Activity

Break your students into small groups for skits or drawings. They're to put on skits (or create drawings) entitled, "Do This, Not That, Because…" In their skit, they have to give an example of something Christians should not do (anything in Col. 3:5-10) and what they should do instead (anything in Col. 3:12-17). They should also show the mind behind both actions (the "Because…" part of the skit). For example, if someone insisted on their own way, they might do so because they think they are what's most important; instead, they should exercise humility because they set their minds on things above, such as loving their neighbor or finding their happiness in the other person's happiness.

Let them prepare and then share their skits/drawings. If students are vulnerable enough, they can share what deeds of the flesh they themselves tend toward; have them consider what they are setting their minds on to cause them to commit those deeds. How can they set their minds on heavenly things and thus live out their new selves with works of the Spirit instead?

(p. 98, DDG) Christ Connection

Those who have trusted in Christ have been given a new identity and new nature in Him. The old self and sinful behavior are put away, replaced by the new self and conduct that pleases God. Everything is to be done in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.



EXPERIENCING NEW IDENTITY IN THE GOSPEL

Colossians 3:1-17

EXPERIENCING NEW IDENTITY IN THE GOSPEL

As believers, we are called to put off sinful behaviors and put on new behaviors that reflect Jesus.

JESUS CONNECTION

Those who have trusted in Christ have been given a new identity and new nature in Him. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the old self and sinful behavior are put away, replaced by a new self and way of living that pleases God.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

SELF-CONTROL – Not acting carelessly on my own impulses, emotions and desires.

HEAD

Fill in the blanks using the verses in Colossians 3 to explain how we are able to live for Jesus.

(verse 2) Set your minds on things _____, not _____ things.

(verse 5) Put to _____ whatever belongs to your _____ nature.

(verse 10) You are being _____ in knowledge according to the image of your _____.

HEART

Why would Paul tell us to "put to death" the behaviors and attitudes that aren't like Jesus? What does he want us to understand about becoming more self-controlled?

God doesn't expect us to become like Jesus by trying harder and harder. Galatians 5:23 says that self-control is actually evidence that the Holy Spirit is working within us. How would it look and feel different to invite the Holy Spirit to help us develop self-control, rather than try harder to have self-control on our own?

HANDS

The kind of self-control described in Colossians 3 is more than just changing an outward behavior. Verse 10 reminds us that our behavior and attitudes change as our minds are renewed. In other words, we learn to live God's way as we learn to think God's way. Choose one of the verses below and write it on an index card or record it as a note in your device. Read it every day this week, try to memorize it and begin replacing your old way of thinking with God's new way.

- Romans 12:2: Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing and perfect will of God.
- 1 John 2:15: Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
- Philippians 4:8: Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy— dwell on these things.